

**Forum:** Security Council

**Issue:** Security Implications of Iran's Nuclear Weapons

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**Introduction:**

After World War II and the dropping of a bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it was agreed that only the P5 (the “winners” of the war, France, UK, USA, China and Russia) could have nuclear weapons. However, during the 1960s, governments decided having no nuclear weapons was better. Through things like the NPT, countries were encouraged to either disarm or abandon pursuit of nuclear weapons. 189 countries out of 192 signed this treaty. However, three countries, India, Pakistan and Israel, refused to. India and Pakistan have conducted “tit-for-tat” nuclear tests in the 1990s. Israel is rumoured to have nuclear weapons based on the amount of fissile material it has. It has, however, never admitted nor denied this. Iran has slowly acquired enough nuclear material etc. to build a bomb, but has always insisted it uses the enriched uranium for peaceful purposes. Its nuclear facilities are therefore under heavy scrutiny from the IAEA, which has repeatedly expressed its concern about Iran. In November, it released a report which details activities related to building a nuclear bomb, such as weaponisation, testing explosives, and computer modelling of a nuclear device. The EU and the US have enforced harsher sanctions, which include severely lowering the amount of oil they import from Iran. Asian economies have been split over this. Japan and South Korea have said they will lower imports. India, on the other hand, has said it will not comply with US sanctions, as it needs to do business with the Iranian Bank and relies heavily on oil imported from Iran.

An Iran with nuclear weapons would have serious security implications for many nations. Iran has repeatedly verbally attacked Western countries, in particular the United States. The United States has repeatedly said it will not attack Iran (yet), as the instability this would cause in the region

would be unmanageable. Also, there is a fear that, if the Iranian government feels pressured enough in a war, it will launch all its missiles before they can be destroyed. Israel, however, has stated its concern with Iran's nuclear program, so an attack from Israel is still very possible. There's been tension between the two for a while, for religious reasons and because Iran doesn't recognise Israel as a legitimate country. This also makes a war with Iran very tricky. Many militants and possibly also ordinary people in the region would see it as an attack on their religion, and therefore retaliate, thus escalating the conflict to include various nations in the region. According to Wikileaks, Gulf Arab states have urged the US to attack Iran. However, Iran sees itself as the leader of Shia Muslims, so predominantly Shia countries in the Middle East will not go against Iran. Countries with a majority of Sunni Muslims, such as Saudi Arabia, will not openly go against Iran, but the quiet rivalry between them has led to covert support for a US or even Israeli bombing of Iran's nuclear plants. Also, if Iran had nuclear weapons, this would greatly upset the balance of power in the Middle East.

### **Definition of Key Words:**

**WMD:** weapons of mass destruction.

**NWS:** Nuclear Weapon States. These are the UK, US, France, Russia and China. More recently, they also include India, Pakistan, and DPR Korea. Israel is suspected to have nuclear weapons, but it has never admitted this. People suspect Iran is also trying to become a nuclear weapon state.

**NNWS:** Non-Nuclear Weapon State. Countries without nuclear weapons.

**Fissile material:** highly enriched plutonium and uranium. Needed to make a nuclear bomb.

**Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM):** a ballistic missile with a long range (5500 km) which is used to hit large targets.

**Anti-aircraft missile systems:** missile used to target airplanes and other aircraft devices.

**NPT:** Non-Proliferation Treaty. A treaty advocated by President Kennedy in the 1960s under which

NWS have to disarm and NNWS have to abandon pursuit of nuclear weapons. However, four countries have not signed it, and the NWS are said not to be following their obligations under the treaty

**Strait of Hormuz:** A water passageway by the Persian Gulf which Iran is threatening to close if US continues with its sanctions. This would mean the US loses its sea route to Iraq.

### **Major Countries and Organisations Involved:**

**IAEA:** International Atomic Energy Agency. Oversees all nuclear weapons and nuclear plants.

**UNODA:** UN Office of Disarmament Affairs. It has worked with the IAEA to assess the situation in Iran, sending commissions to make judgements of what can still be done to improve the situation.

**US:** Most of Iran's previous threats have been directed at the US. The US has repeatedly said it will not launch an attack on Iran, but has instead enforced various sanctions on Iran in an effort to cripple its economy and thus get it to halt its nuclear program. It is reluctant to intervene militarily because it fears wars similar to Iraq and Afghanistan.

**EU:** The EU negotiated a temporary peace treaty with Iran in 2003, after the US failed to use its invasion of Iraq as a negotiating strategy. The EU-3 (mainly **France**, **Germany** and the **UK**) offered to aid Iran with technology to use its nuclear material for energy. In return, Iran would have to reaffirm its non-proliferation through signing various treaties and cooperate with the IAEA, among other things.

**UK:** The UK, as stated above, has tried to broker a deal with Iran in the past. As it failed, it now follows the US with sanctions.

**France:** France was part of the EU-3 who tried to make a deal with Iran. It now follows the EU's policy of sanctions, though these are often not as severe as those of the US.

**China:** China is reluctant to have any sort of military intervention, and also did not back the latest UN sanctions, abstaining from voting. It insists diplomacy is the only way to go. It says it firmly holds to the principles of the NPT. It has in 2006 stopped working as closely with Iran so as to

enforce cooperation with Washington. However, it has always watered down the sanctions the US wanted to push through the Security Council. It has also helped Iran escape complete isolation by the US. It is believed that this is mainly to keep US hegemony in check, as well as for economic reasons. With China's increasing global role, it becomes increasingly important in whether a round of sanctions fails or is effective. It feels that, because the oil sanctions were not approved by the UN, it lacks international legitimacy, and is so reluctant to join. However, it has to protect its interests with its major trading partners, the EU and US, as well as with major oil deliverer Saudi Arabia. It also feels that the US applies double standards, turning a blind eye to Israel's nuclear program but demanding Iran stop. If it joins, it will be because it believes Iran should honour its obligations under the NPT and international law, and because it does not want to harm its trading relations.

**Russia:** walks a fine line between trying to please the West and trying to please Iran. It has strategic relations with Iran, but needs to please the US etc so as not to be isolated and so it won't be attacked over other issues. However, in a case of the US finding a solution to Iran's nuclear problem which does not include Russia, it is most likely to back Iran. It has in the past insisted that Iran is not trying to build a weapon and supported it by sending anti-aircraft missile systems.

**Israel:** Iran has repeatedly attacked not only the US but also Israel in speech, denying the Holocaust and calling the state of Israel illegitimate. Israel therefore sees a real threat in Iran having nuclear weapons. It is rumoured to have nuclear weapons, though it has neither confirmed nor denied this. An attack from Israel is also very possible if diplomatic attempts fail, as it has attacked nuclear plants in Syria and Iran.

**Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC):** An elite branch of Iran's military and allegedly the biggest driver of the program.

### **Relevant UN Treaties and Resolutions**

Security Council 2006 S/RES/1696

Security Council 2006 S/RES/1737

Security Council 2007 S/RES/1747

Security Council 2008 S/RES/1803

Security Council 2008 S/RES/1835

Security Council 2010 S/RES/1929

### **Possible Solutions**

Previous sanctions and Security Council resolutions have failed partially because private businesses did not stop trading with Iran, and so its economy was not hurt completely. Also, in order for sanctions to really work, countries like India and China, which are among Iran's main oil importers, have to agree to sanctions. Though the rest of the world plays a large part, sanctions from these two countries would seriously dent Iran's economy. A temporary strategy which has been suggested includes containment of Iran: until a better solution is found, it should at least not be allowed to expand into other countries, and be deterred from using its nuclear weapons (if it has any). Furthermore, to find out just how close Iran is to making a nuclear weapon, it has to be persuaded to cooperate with the IAEA. This can be done through tougher sanctions, but unless these sanctions are multilateral, they will not have much of an effect.

### **Sources**

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